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RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN/UAЕ CAMEL JOCKEYS

¶1. Summary: A UAE columnist in "Al-Khaleej" warns of Iran's active intervention in Arab issues, especially in Iraq and Lebanon. An editorial in "Al-Ittihad" lauded the way the UAEG handled the issue of camel jockeys. End Summary.

¶2. Under the headline "The Iranian expansion in Arab affairs", UAE columnist, Dr. Abdul-Khaliq Abdulla, wrote on 09/26 in Sharjah-based pan-Arab daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000):

"Iranian interference in Iraqi internal affairs, such as the occupation of Iraq, is an important reason for the deterioration of the security situation and living conditions in Iraq. Iran is today an active party to the dismemberment of Iraq. There is nothing worse than the American occupation of Iraq except for the Iranian intervention in Iraq. Both of them equally bear the political and moral responsibility for the suffering of the Arab people in Iraq...

Iran is playing very shrewdly and subtly the tune of sectarianism and at the same time ensures that it imposes itself as the spokesman for all Shiites around the world. The Iranian expansion is responsible for fueling sectarian tensions in a volatile region... Sunni-Shiite anger has reached alarming levels in Iraq, which is on the verge of civil war. Sectarian tension in Lebanon has also increased because of Hezbollah's victory backed by Iran. Such unprecedented sectarian tension can be exploited by enemies to divide the Arab nation already suffering from chronic political fragmentation. The Arab nation has no interest in fabricating battles with Iran, but the Iranian expansion is harmful and it is very important to deal with it. The best way to deal with the Iranian expansion is to play an active Arab role in Iraq, increasing the dose of Arab aid to Lebanon and establishing a national, political, and Arab dialogue to alleviate secular and religious conflict. With that done, it will be alright to activate a direct Arab-Iranian dialogue on all the popular and official levels to talk frankly and openly about legitimate Arab fears of the unprecedented Iranian expansion into our Arab affairs."

¶3. Under the headline "Necessary steps to address allegations", Abu Dhabi-based semi-official Arabic-language daily "Al-Ittihad" editorialized on 09/25 (circulation 65,000):

"The issue of Camel Jockeys in the UAE has been resolved through a systematic and serious plan sponsored by the senior officials of the country. How this issue was handled reflects the seriousness and official concern used in dealing with this thorny issue... which

previously resulted in a negative impact on the depiction of the UAE in international forums and specialized reports. The fine and professional manner with which the UAE dealt with this began with the law issued by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the president of the UAE on the regulation of camel races and the prohibition of using children under the age of 18 as camel jockeys... Moreover, a national committee was formed to combat human trafficking in UAE... The UAE leaders were keen to tackle this problem as it goes against the civilized religious and moral values that prevail in the UAE. This was done through coordination between the UAE's Ministry of the Interior and the Organization of the United Nations Children's Fund "UNICEF", which recently lauded what has been achieved... The organization's representatives expressed their appreciation for the UAE's efforts in solving this problem. The UAE has, indeed, set an example in solving this thorny issue. However, this impressive effort remains to be publicized by the foreign mass media because several recent reports, published by Western media, talked about the link between camel jockeys in the UAE and the traditional sports activities in the UAE... This reflects a lack of awareness by many Western media sources of the actions taken by the UAE to address this problem, which has been already been resolved in a civilized and humane way."

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